

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

***United States Attorney
Carol C. Lam***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - September 14, 2005

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced today the unsealing of a two-count indictment charging EARL JOHN PLACE with attempted inducement of a minor to engage in unlawful sexual activity and attempted transfer of obscene material to a minor under age 16. A federal grand jury sitting in San Diego handed up the indictment on Wednesday, September 7, 2005, which was then sealed until PLACE was arrested yesterday.

The indictment alleges that on and between June and September 2005, PLACE, using the mail and computer did knowingly attempt to persuade, entice, coerce and induce a minor to engage in unlawful sexual activity for which a person could be charged with a criminal offense and, on August 21, 2005, did knowingly attempt to transfer obscene material to a minor under the age of 16 years.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Alessandra P. Serano, who is prosecuting the case, PLACE is currently in federal custody in San Diego after being arrested in Mexico City by Mexican law enforcement officials on September 13, 2005. PLACE, a United States citizen and Catholic monk living in Mexico City, was expelled from Mexico by Mexican immigration officials.

United States Attorney Lam stated, "No one has license to sexually exploit children, period. This is true regardless of where a person lives or what station in life he occupies."

"The Internet does not recognize international borders. ICE is committed to pursuing all investigative leads to the fullest extent," said ICE Special Agent-in-Charge, Michael Unzueta. "This investigation is a perfect example of why binational cooperation with our law enforcement counterparts in Mexico is important."

This indictment was the result of an investigation by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement with the assistance of Mexican law enforcement officials.

The defendant was arraigned on the indictment earlier today by Magistrate Judge Ruben B. Brooks, at the United States Courthouse in San Diego. His next court appearance will be on September 15, 2005 at 1:45 p.m., before Magistrate Judge Brooks.

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 05CR1552-J

EARL JOHN PLACE

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2422(b) (Attempted Inducement of a Minor to Engage in Unlawful Sexual Activity) and 1470 (Attempted Transfer of Obscene Material to a Minor)
Penalties: Mandatory Minimum 5 years and up to 30 years' incarceration and \$250,000 fine for 18 U.S.C. § 2422(b) and up to 10 years' incarceration and \$250,000 fine for 18 U.S.C. § 1470.

AGENCY

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security

An indictment is not evidence that the defendant committed the crime charged. The defendant is presumed innocent until the United States meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.